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Senior Economic
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Commissioners

Daphne Collins, Chair
Christopher Steele,
Vice Chair
Jack Leader, Secretary

Barry Abramson
David Abromowitz
Charles Eisenberg
Robert Gifford
Jane Ives
Peter Kai Jung Lew
Ronald Lipof
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CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

February 16, 2012

Commissioners: Daphne Collins (Chair), Chris Steele (Vice Chair), Barry Abramson, David Abromowitz, Charles Eisenberg, Jane Ives, Peter Lew, Ron Lipof, John Pears, Darryl Settles

Staff: Amanda Stout

Guests: Bill Renke

Absent: Jack Leader (Secretary), Robert Gifford, Philip Plottel

1. EDC Business

- **Motion to approve the January 10th EDC Meeting Minutes. Motion approved (10-0, Steele seconded by Eisenberg).**

- The March meeting will be held on Thursday, March 8th and will be a kick-off dialogue with members of the Board of Aldermen.

2. EDC 2011 Annual Report

- With input from commissioners and staff, Collins completed the EDC Annual Report detailing activities from January – December 2011. Stout will finalize and submit to the Board of Aldermen.

3. Bank Moratorium Letter

- Eisenberg presented a draft version of a letter from the EDC regarding a moratorium on new banks. The EDC discussed the language of the letter.
- **Motion to approve the letter to be sent to the Board of Aldermen proposing that "For the next twelve months, no bank shall be allowed to be built or opened for business on the ground floor of any building in any Business District within the City unless it receives a Special Permit allowing it to do so." Motion approved (10-0, Lew seconded by Steele).**

4. MBTA Comment Letter

- Steele suggested that the EDC should address the MBTA's proposed fare increases and service cuts during the current public comment period that ends March 12th. Eisenberg suggested that the EDC support the proposals of the MBTA Advisory Board. Settles suggested that the letter also address support for increasing the hours that transit service runs, particularly on weekends. Stout reminded the EDC that Mayor Warren and the Board of Aldermen have already written letters stating their strong opposition to proposed service cuts, noting the reductions particularly in Commuter Rail and bus service would be detrimental to Newton. Commissioners discussed what the City might be able to contribute to a solution in the way of zoning and policy changes.

- **Motion to draft a letter from the EDC to Richard Davey, MassDOT Secretary, due on March 12th to (1) oppose proposed service cuts, (2) strongly recommend the adoption of the MBTA Advisory Board proposals, and (3) advocate for service to extend until 2:00 a.m. to more appropriately serve the needs of transit-dependent populations, particularly those whose working situations rely upon transit. Motion approved 10-0 (Eisenberg, seconded by Steele).**
- **Motion to draft a letter from the EDC to Mayor Warren and the President of the Board of Aldermen stating that, in light of the MBTA's proposed service cuts and the dialogue within the City regarding MBTA service, that we examine our current zoning code to make the most of the MBTA service and propose that as service is either retained or enhanced that we will correspondingly consider zoning changes that would increase density around transit stations in exchange for a commitment to maintain active long-term service, specifically to examine the utilization of 40R and 40S. Motion approved (10-0, Steele, seconded by Lew).**

5. Nominations and Elections of EDC Officers

- The Commission thanked Collins for her 2 ½ years of service at EDC Chair. Collins opened nominations for one-year terms for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Collins nominated Chris Steele for the position of Chair. The nomination was seconded by Eisenberg and Steele accepted. Steele nominated Ron Lipof for the position of Vice Chair. The nomination was seconded by Eisenberg and Lipof accepted. Eisenberg nominated Jack Leader for the position of Secretary. The nomination was seconded by Steele. Leader was not in attendance, but had indicated his interest in continuing in this position.
- Hearing no further nominations, Collins moved to hold elections for each position. All three positions were elected unanimously. **The new EDC officers are:**
 - **Christopher Steele, Chair**
 - **Ronald Lipof, Vice Chair**
 - **Jack Leader, Secretary**

6. Old Business: Project Updates

- **Small Business Incubator:** On February 15th, Commissioners attended the kick-off meeting at Suffolk Law School. Steele delivered a presentation and Commissioners and staff fielded questions from students and faculty.
- **Riverside:** Collins reported on the January 23rd and February 9th ZAP meetings, and Steele reported on the February 15th ZAP meeting.
- **Austin Street:** On February 6th, the Board of Aldermen voted to authorize the Mayor to sell or lease the Austin Street site, setting a “nominal” price for the property. Commissioners raised questions about the process the City used to obtain a third-party appraisal, the process the Board of Aldermen used to set the minimum price, and the precedent set for considering development economics in similar projects in the City.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout, AICP, Senior Economic Development Planner